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STORM CLOUDS OVER THE MIDDLE EAST

by Alfred M. Lilienthal

The failure to formulate a definite U.S. policy for Asia as a whole has already resulted in the loss of China and has seriously endangered Korea and Indo-China. A similar failure has placed us in a dangerously weak position to meet the Soviet challenge in the Middle East. For our strategy in that vital area, to date, has been unfortunately shaped by weighing Zionist against Arab claims instead of subordinating policy to the total objective of stopping Communism.

Nearly one million sick, starving and shelterless Arabs, many of whom live in tents and caves, have either been displaced from their homes or have been made entirely destitute as the result of the Holy Land hostilities. Almost 70 per cent of the total indigenous Arab population of what once was the mandate of Palestine are actual refugees.

These refugees brought almost no assets with them and their first sustenance was received from the government into whose territories they fled. The initial program of the United Nations has just kept them alive on direct relief at the rate of $2.00 per person per month, or 7 cents per day, for the bare essentials of food, shelter and medical aid. The new works relief projects offer temporary alleviation, at best.

What fertile ground for the propaganda of the Cominform! It was poverty and despair that drove the populations of Europe and the Far East to seek reform by revolution instead of evolution. The Kremlin is actively inciting the Arab world to solve its problems similarly.

II

The "open sesame" to the area is Iran, now mentioned as likely to follow Korea, as a Soviet victim. Repulsed earlier, the Russians are again threatening the Shah's country and are being helped by the growing underground activity of the pro-Communist Tudeh, or People's Party.

While the Communist Party has been outlawed in all Middle East countries, save Israel, Party members have either gone underground or have not yet come to the surface. Hunger, destitution, illiteracy, unemployment, and heavy taxation, handmaidens of a substandard of living, have long made the people of the area a ready target for Red sharpshooters. The dangerously top-heavy social and economic structure has constituted a formal invitation to "invade" even before the recent war.

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Within Israel, there has been a determined effort on the part of the Ben Gurion Government to hew a middle course in the East-West struggle. While the Communists control but four members in the Knesset, Moshe Sneh and his strong Leftist Mapam Laborites are fervent supporters of orientation toward the Kremlin.

Reports from Acre, northern Israel's largest Arab center, indicate successful Communist recruiting amongst refugees where the Party is allowed to operate openly and legally. Confiscations of Arab property by the Israel Government are ideal weapons for conversions. The return to the Soviet Union of all the properties of the Russian Orthodox Church in Palestine has given an additional foothold for propaganda in the area.

III

Russia, while supporting Palestine partition herself, has helped create the very state of chaos her vote intended. She has, above all, effectively worked for the withdrawal of Britain from the area, interfered with the American development of oil resources and has made sure that no Great Power filled the spot of ascendency vacated by the British. And American policy has played into Russia's hands.

The uneducated Arab masses perhaps do not understand Communist doctrines, but their intense hatred of the U.S. and Britain, for having assisted in what they regard as an international conspiracy which drove them from their homes, can be whipped to a frenzy with anti-Western slogans. They arrive at the Russian camp as fellow travellers, if not as active proponents.

Dr. Charles Malik, the Lebanese Minister to the United States, has warned that the Arab States will turn to Communism if the Western Powers favor Israel too much. In a recent press interview, the Syrian Minister of Defense reiterated the position previously taken by the Minister of Economy in emphasizing the possibilities of closer relations between the Arabs and the Soviet Union. Such a friendship, he said, would be based, not so much on an orientation to Communism, but on a practical approach to the basic fact that "Russia is an enemy of our enemy". The abstention of Egypt in the Security Council vote to apply military sanctions against Northern Korea, and her very hesitation in supporting the UN action shows the extent to which U.S. prestige has fallen.

Russia's concern is not only with the Arab people but with their most valuable possession, that indispensable and expendable resource -- oil -- which the U.S. now controls and Moscow covets for military power. The proximity of this area to the vital Soviet industrial regions supplies still another reason for Soviet interest. Nor can Moscow tolerate

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that the nearby air bases in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabi, Syria and in Lebanon be controlled by any outside Power.

On May 25, the United States, Great Britain and France simultaneously announced an agreement regulating the sale of arms to Middle East countries on a basis of parity between the Arab States and Israel. The three Powers, in the face of the possibilities of an arms race, pledged all necessary action to prevent any violation of frontiers or armistice lines. The purpose of the action taken was stated to be to "permit the Middle East countries to play their part in the defense of the area as a whole". If this declaration is intended to usher in a new U.S. approach in which our national interest would dictate a course of action for the Middle East as a whole, there will have to be certain important changes right here on our domestic scene.

IV

Great harm has been done by our recent policy. But it is not too late to repair the errors of the past. The American people of all faiths have generously assisted the refugees of Israel: by private gifts, governmental loans, political support, propaganda dissemination and sympathetic understanding. A sound policy in the Middle East demands equal consideration for the refugees of the Arab world.

"For every Jew settled in Palestine, there has been an Arab who has lost a home", to use Dorothy Thompson's words. The American public has known little and cared less about this problem. A conspiracy of silence has reigned. Tucked away on a back page of a handful of newspapers has been a line or two telling the Arab plight. To 99.9 per cent of Americans, the word "refugee" means only Jews.

A combination of sensitivity to pressure groups and indifference has characterized the Congressional attitude. For instance, a prominent Congressman, in the face of protests from Zionist constituents, was forced to resign as Vice Chairman of HELP (Holyland Emergency Liaison Program), the group which has been trying to carry the story of the displaced Arabs to the American public.

Attempts to amend the displaced persons legislation so as to permit the entrance into the United States of even a small number of Arab refugees have been shouted down. Congress did enact a provision for $27,450,000 for Palestine refugees. This, however, was a U.S. responsibility as a member of the United Nations to a United Nations agency and, as such, not an American undertaking.

Political leaders vying for the Zionist vote have rushed to support the banners of Israel. Alben Barkley, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bob Taft,

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Henry Ford, Jr., are only a few of the national leaders who have publicly identified themselves with the current drive for funds of the United Jewish Appeal. Will they lend their names to equally imposing advertisements in behalf of the unfortunates of the Arab countries? Is the President willing to send cordial greetings to movements dedicated to assist the Arabs, as he has to those pledged to Zionism?

Israel, once a desert, has been transformed into a garden. Will the lands of the Arab countries be similarly built up with the assistance of American philanthropy and capital? Will the press and radio, with malice toward none, tell the story of suffering and hardship?

A sincere desire to build an impregnable area against our enemies -- and not votes -- will guide the answer to these questions.

Life in mass camps and work on relief projects is no lasting solution. The Arab refugees from Israel must be permanently resettled in homes, as the Jewish emigrees into Israel are being helped, or they must be otherwise compensated for their losses, as twice resolved by the UN. The U.S. responsibility to these people flows directly from the part we played in the partitioning of Palestine.

A concern for suffering humanity anywhere is in line with the finest traditions of universal Judaism. It is the philosophy which the late Judah Magnus and his Ichud movement has long preached in Jerusalem. Even the most nationalist-minded Zionists must realize that Israel cannot be happy at being surrounded by a ring of misery. She could never survive as a "democratic island" in a "red sea".

The warnings of the brave few who were critical of our policy towards Palestine have been ignored and ridiculed. As elsewhere, the time has come for the Administration to cast aside timidity and show some courage in the Middle East. Myopia must give way to enlightenment, political opportunism to statesmanship. An equal treatment policy which regards the region as a whole is the only way Communism can be effectively shut out and an answer be found to the misery which has beset this land. It is the one sure method of bringing to the side of the Western allies the Moslem-Arab world of 250 million people which extends from the Atlantic through North Africa into Pakistan and the easterly islands of Indonesia.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. VII, No. 31

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By Frank C. Hanighen August 2, 1950

THE WAR: A high source in Tokyo writes us as follows: "The situation here is rather tense. It looks like it's fifty-fifty whether we have another Bataan or not. Our troops are committed piecemeal and there are not enough to hold a complete line, consequently the Reds infiltrate and come around the ends during the night and our forces withdraw as positions become surrounded. Our air has been effective, but has been unable to stop infantry attacks. Even though roads, bridges, tunnels, and supply lines have been destroyed, they immediately manage to get supplies forward through unmarked roads and lanes. We were caught at a bad time as troops had been withdrawn from Japan and many of our materials shipped to other areas. The situation is still bad and will probably get worse before it gets better. Of course there is always the chance that Red China might pour troops in from Manchuria. They have been doing this, but so far they are Korean troops from the Chinese Red Army. Leadership seems to come from experience with the Chinese Army and their tactics at the present time seem to be to drive toward our fire in such numbers that we can't stop them. It is just as if someone were driving them forward with a gun, with instructions that if they retreated they would be shot.

"The whole thing came without warning and there were no more surprised people than in GHQ. Same old story -- unpreparedness of the U.S.A., lack of intelligence, and lack of materials. Korea had operated under the State Department for the past year with Central Intelligence Agency as recognized agents. The State Department's only interest was to get as many deadheads in there as possible, which amounted to several thousand -- they must have had 500 stenographers. Some of them are working in Tokyo now and the stories they tell of some of the activities make one's blood boil. Money was spent on such things as tape recorders and expensive pieces of office equipment. Too bad McCarthy wasn't allowed to sweep that section clean."

---- The Pentagon has told the French General Staff that it's up to the French Government to publicly approve the arming of Germany. The United States cannot do so for political reasons, but would fall in line if France takes the first step. The American, the British and French military staffs all urge this move, but are blocked by the politicos.

---- Truman has asked General Walter Bedell Smith to replace Hillenkoetter as head of Central Intelligence Agency. Smith declined on ground of health. General "Wild Bill" Donovan is considered the most likely candidate for the job.

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ACHESON: With a rather suspicious casualness, friends of Secretary Acheson are dropping the word that Dean wouldn't mind serving as Ambassador to the Court of St. James. At the same time, the bitter attack in the Capital press against Secretary Louis Johnson is abating. Thus the maneuver -- "save-Dean-by-smearing-Louis" -- appears to have failed. Fair Dealers admit that it was "overplayed"; and that it drew support from only a few Congressmen. Out in the country, many people didn't know who the Secretary of Defense was; but they did know about Secretary of State Acheson, and not favorably. The fact is that some in the conservative press early saw through the maneuver and exposed it for what it was. Not immodestly, we claim to have been "early".

In view of this situation, the campaign to oust Acheson has taken on renewed vigor, but on no mere personal basis. There is a wider realization that the State Department leadership which has brought us to the present pass must be changed, be-

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fore we can go on; that the whole "team" in charge of foreign affairs must be removed, from the Secretary down. Significant was a very blunt speech delivered by Senator Byrd, in the Senate on July 31, which deserves more publicity than it got in the metropolitan press. This leading Democrat said that "blunders precipitated this nation into one of the most dangerous situations ever to confront us", and referred to "the utter stupidity and the unbelievable ineptitude of our actions with respect to the Korean conflict". And Byrd warned, "those responsible will be held accountable by the verdict of American opinion".

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THE FIGHT OVER CONTROLS: Economics is the last refuge of -- a politician. In the past week, on Capitol Hill, lofty bickering about price and wage controls has served to conceal the fact that politics, pure politics, is at the bottom of nearly all, if not all, the business. Truman wants controls, wants total mobilization, but only after the fall election. Would the man from Kansas City risk the fortunes of his party in the commotion resulting from imposition of all-out controls? The answer to the question is as superfluous as to assume that most Republicans on the Hill would allow him to get away with it without harrassment.

And so, many Republicans insist on all-out controls. They figure that if Truman is given these and refuses to use them before November, they can effectively accuse him of letting down the boys in Korea, not to mention the fuming housewife. And if he does use the controls before November, they will profit from the ensuing discontent. Also, in this GOP attitude there is a pathetic desire to do or say something "positive" and "constructive". Fair Deal propaganda has given the GOP an inferiority complex; the Republican minority is afraid to perform the real function of an Opposition -- to oppose.

Further, many GOP Members seem to feel that they should lapse into reverent silence as soon as Mr. Bernard Baruch materializes on the Hill. The Baruch myth has force, although some Members have sniggered at the financier's act during the past week. They recall that he has been out of the limelight for some time; indeed, ever since he bet on the wrong candidate in 1948. Isn't he, they ask, rather enjoying a chance to put Truman in the wrong? Be that as it may. As Edna Lonigan said last week, Baruch is fundamentally of the same school of thought as the "controllists" who provided the economic base on which Hitler built his house. Neither he nor his GOP followers seem to realize how difficult it is to get rid of controls; nor the danger of placing these instruments in the hands of Socialists who will have the duty of using them. The fatuity, for instance, of expecting a Fair Deal Executive apparatus to treat Labor and Management with equal firmness -- that passeth understanding. It's the narrow idée fixe of Baruch against the common sense of Harry Byrd and Bob Taft.

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THE WAR BUDGET: Edna Lonigan writes from Capitol Hill -- The Appropriations bill, still before the Senate, is a test of the Senate's ability to meet the war issues realistically. The Senators are trying to reconcile a five billion dollar deficit with the cost of the Korean war. Senators Byrd and Bridges had already proposed straight percentage cuts across the board. Last week, Senator Douglas of Illinois renewed his attack on reckless peacetime spending. In association with Kem of Missouri and Williams of Delaware, he submitted a list of 68 specific cuts in the budget, which would save a billion dollars. One half of these proposed reductions would be in civilian construction (rivers, harbors, etc.) and the rest in administrative costs. This proposal included a plan to reduce the annual leave of Federal employees, which is now five and a half weeks.

Mr. Douglas emphasized that regional interests presented a barrier to economy. Senators from the farm states are always present for discussion of farm bills; those from mountain and prairie states, for irrigation and reclamation bills; and those

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from the Gulf states, for river and harbor improvement. But it is virtually impossible for other Senators to be present at each separate discussion -- to represent the taxpayers. "The special interests", remarked Douglas, "were therefore concentrated and determined while the general interests were scattered, diffused and unorganized. It's small wonder, therefore, that no cuts were made."

The cuts proposed by Douglas did not touch the major issue: How many of its present functions can the Executive keep? In other words -- what of the Welfare State? This was the major issue recently in peacetime. Today it is all important. The Welfare State is the peacetime extension of war economy. The two cannot practicably exist together.

It was Senator Byrd who underlined the reality. In the Wall Street Journal on July 31, he proposed cutting the civilian budget ten billions at once. He would eliminate all the little spending programs which the Administration added between 1948 and 1950, and go back to the level of 1948, when the Government spent $6.4 billion on domestic welfare. This proposal if enacted would save $5.4 billion. Byrd would also cut foreign aid, on the ground that we cannot help build up the civilian economy of Europe when we are cutting our own civilian economy to the bone. These proposed savings would permit our military needs to be taken care of without additional strain on the taxpayer.

If we do not economize, as Byrd suggested, the upshot will be a tax increase of about 40 per cent on individuals and corporations. "I submit", said Byrd, "that no such stupendous new tax burdens should be added to the existing high tax rates until the non-military expenditures are cut to the bone." He added, "it is alarming indeed that the President of the United States did not even mention the necessity of preserving the fiscal solvency of America in either his message to Congress or his broadcast to the people. Once our fiscal system is weakened, our freedoms will be destroyed, and Russia knows this", he said.

Despite Byrd's warnings, the Members of Congress do not like explaining to the people that the promises of the Welfare State will not be redeemed. Most of the Members are up for election. But it might be a mistake for Congressmen to assume that the people cannot think straight about this matter of spending. After all it is their sons who will pay for our Government's mistakes with their lives.

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BESTON: Our duel with Soviet Russia has inspired comment from an old friend and contributor, Henry Beston. In a letter to us from the cool sanity of the state of Maine, he remarks: "Thinking of the Russkies, I often wonder that not more is made of the fact that their favorite game is chess, a game which requires from the beginning an over-all concept of the contest ahead together with the tactical skill to seize chance advantages by the hair. A nation which plays chess is a nation to be reckoned with."

Speaking of Beston (who, incidentally, promises us a piece on agriculture soon) the publishers, Farrar and Straus, sent us White Pine and Blue Water, "A State of Maine Reader, Edited by Henry Beston". In this symposium of essays by various authors, from James Russell Lowell to E. B. White, one can retreat from the mad world of war to a country and a culture where "one does not have to elbow or gasp to remain an individual and a human being". Worth the price of $4.50.

NOTE: A flood of requests has exhausted our supply of copies of Dr. Barnes' pamphlet, Rauch on Roosevelt: A Study in Appearances and Realities. Subscribers interested in receiving this publication should write to Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes, Cooperstown, New York.

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Book Events

Conservatism Revisited: The Revolt Against Revolt, by Peter Viereck, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.50. Reviewed by Frank Chodorov.

The business that always engages the enthusiasm and energies of the "liberal" is change; from the historic point of view it turns out to be change for the sake of change. Recognizing that institutions making for injustices attach themselves to existing values, the "liberal" aims to destroy not only the institutions but also the values. That the institutions may be perversions of the values, which may not be evil in themselves, does not deter his passion for destruction. Nor does he reflect that these values, these habits of thought, may persist even after the superimposed institutions are destroyed. Thus, the modern "liberal" is quick to condemn capitalism, or private property, because of the evil of monopolism that grew up on it; he dismisses the instinctive concept of ownership, pontifically declaring it to be an effect, not a cause; then, just as pontifically, he asserts that State capitalism will cleanse private capitalism of all its evils and will also rid the individual of the value of ownership. All of which is mere rationalism of his passion for destruction.

Conservatism, on the other hand, and as distinguished from reactionaryism, is for change, but only within the context of accepted values. It aims to hold on to what is good, to habits of mind that are in themselves beneficial or natural, while ridding Society of the evils that have grown up around them; its objective is improvement, not destruction. And its process is gradualism, introducing changes only as the framework of prevailing values can absorb them without doing violence. It abhors revolutionary changes simply because such methods are always productive of evils worse than those presumably destroyed. What follows, for instance, from the debunking of standards, morals and traditions in toto? Pure opportunism. Since there is no positive measurement of human behavior, all standards being relative, success is its own justification. Self-restraint is silly; "anything goes". From that habit of thinking comes racketeering, the first step toward Hitlerism and Stalinism.

For this definition and defense of conservatism, Peter Viereck, in his most readable Conservatism Revisited, takes as historical background the case of Prince Metternich. The picture he gives us of this classic conservative is far more interesting and favorable than that derived from schoolroom history books. It was his genius to recognize the dangers inherent in the liberalistic movement of his times and to oppose it; his bad reputation follows from the liberalistic bent of the historians. In view of current attempts to break down the nationalistic barriers that have in the last century made for so much social and political disturbance in Europe, the story of how Metternich tried to prevent the erection of these barriers appears in better light.

Nineteenth Century liberalism, emerging from the romanticism of the French Revolution, and culminating in the revolutions of 1848, directed its energies at the destruction of monarchical institutions. Its particular fetish was constitutionalism, which implied political and economic separatism. Monarchism, for all its defects and injustices, which Metternich tried to mitigate by proposing reforms his feudal-minded superiors regularly rejected, did preserve a European spirit by a commonality of interests. This was a value worth holding on to, and Metternich foresaw its destruction in the rise of nationalism and its natural offspring, racism. If, as Mr. Viereck implies, the princes of Europe, whom Metternich saved from Napoleonism but could not save from themselves, had heeded his advice for gradual reform -- reform that did not violate accepted values -- perhaps Europe might not have been the armed camp it has been since 1948.

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